

New sterile insect release facility in Sarasota, Florida. The facility supports the USDA, APHIS Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) Preventive Release Program.



Photo: APHIS Deputy Administrator Osama El-Lissy (center, holding scissors) marks the official opening of our newest sterile insect release facility in Sarasota. The facility supports the agency's Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) Preventive Release Program, which plays a critical role in preventing Medfly outbreaks in Florida.

April 17, 2019 – APHIS' Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) program marked the opening of its newest Sterile Insect Release Facility in Sarasota, Florida. The facility supports the agency's Mediterranean fruit fly (Medfly) Preventive Release Program, which plays a critical role in preventing the establishment of Medflies in Florida. Medfly is considered one of the world's most damaging agricultural pests because it attacks more than 200 different types of fruits and vegetables, rendering them unfit for consumption.

Every week, PPQ rears and releases about 100 million sterile flies over high-risk areas in Florida. These sterile flies mate with wild Medflies and produce no offspring, helping to breed out of existence any possible Medfly populations before they can become a threat. As a result, no Medfly outbreaks have occurred in areas under Florida's preventive release program. The new facility doubles the capacity of the one it replaces.